

## **BARBECUE COOKING UTENSIL**

### **CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

5           This application claims the benefit of provisional patent application Serial No.  
60/432,774 filed December 12, 2002.

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10           N/A

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### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

#### **1. Field of the Invention**

          This invention relates generally to a cooking utensil, and more particularly, to a  
large grilling fork that allows sizable food items commonly prepared on grills and  
25       barbecues, such as steaks and other large portioned items, to be grasped and controlled by  
with a single hand.

#### **2. Description of the Background Art**

          Conventional barbecue cooking utensils can be difficult to use, especially for  
large cuts of meat or when cooking with one hand. In addition, meat can easily fall off  
30       conventional forks. If a barbecue-cooking utensil existed that made it easier to retrieve  
and maneuver food items on a grill, it would be well received. The instant invention  
addresses this unfulfilled need in the prior art by providing a large grilling fork that

allows for sizable food items commonly prepared on grills and barbecues to be conveniently grasped and controlled with one-hand.

#### BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In light of the foregoing, it is an object of the present invention to provide a cooking  
5 utensil that makes convenient and easy to handle food items prepared on barbeque grills.

It is another object of the instant invention to provide a cooking utensil adapted for easily grasping and handling large food items cooked on barbeque grills, such as steaks and chicken, with one hand.

It is also an object of the instant invention to provide a cooking utensil in the form of  
10 a large fork that grasps and releases large food items prepared on a grill.

It is an additional object of the instant invention to provide a barbeque fork that simplifies the task of retrieving and accessing food items from a grill and that facilitates use of one hand when handling food on a grill.

It is a further object of the instant invention to provide a barbeque fork that provides  
15 leveraged support when handling large food items on a grill or other cooking device.

It is yet another object of the instant invention to provide a barbeque fork that can read the temperature of food items.

In light of these and other objects, the instant invention provides a cooking utensil in the form of a barbeque fork that simplifies the task of retrieving and accessing food items  
20 from a grill. The barbeque fork design facilitates operation with one hand. The barbeque fork comprises a base or handle, tines, biasing rod, at least one guide for supporting and sliding the rod and a cross-brace or bracket. The base/handle is elongated and comprises a grip at one end and the tines at the opposite end. The barbeque fork comprises at least one

tine and preferably two tines. Preferably two rods support the rod over and along the top or bottom surface of the handle. The guides project outward from the handle and each define apertures for receiving and guiding the rod when sliding it over the handle. One end of the rod is terminated by a stop or cap that prevents the rod from passing completely through the guides. Alternatively, the barbeque fork may comprise one guide or all but one guide includes a slot for removing the rod to facilitate pivoting the rod. The cross-brace is diametrically positioned at the opposite end of the rod and engages the food items when the rod is slid forward to support or remove the food items. In an alternative embodiment, the barbeque fork includes a thermometer device for reading the temperature of food items.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a first perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the barbecue fork in accordance with the instant invention.

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of another embodiment of the barbecue fork in accordance with the instant invention.

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the preferred and alternative embodiments of the barbecue fork in accordance with the instant invention.

Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the preferred and alternative embodiments of the barbecue fork in accordance with the instant invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

With reference to the drawings, Figs. 1 to 4 depict the preferred and alternative embodiments of the instant invention, which is generally referenced as a personal a barbecue fork and, or by numeric character 10. Referring to Figs. 1 to 4, the barbecue

fork 10 generally comprises a barbecue fork base or handle 12, a rod 20 slidably supported to the base 11 by at least one guide 22 and a cross-brace or bracket 24 at the end of the rod 20 proximal the tines 18. The barbecue fork 10 preferably comprises at least two guides 22 with hollow openings or apertures 23 for passing, supporting and  
5 guiding the rod 20. The base 11 of the fork 10 comprises the handle 12 and dual tine head 16. The handle 12 portion of the base 11 is approximately one-half inch in width ( $\frac{1}{2}$ " ) and approximately nine inches (9") in length and the dual tine head 16 preferably comprises two tines 18 and is approximately two-inches (2") wide and three inches (3") long. The handle 12 and tine head 16 together are approximately twelve-inches (12") in  
10 length. The handle 12 preferably includes a grip 14 to provide an improved gripping surface.

The metal rod 20 is supported on the lower side of the handle 12, but may be supported on the upper side in an alternative embodiment. The metal rod 20 is preferably approximately three-thirty-seconds of an inch ( $\frac{3}{32}$ " ) to a quarter inch ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) in diameter  
15 and approximately seven inches (7") in length. The metal rod 20 is preferably placed in position to run approximately parallel to or over the handle 12 at a point starting approximately three-and-one-half inches ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ " ) from the grip 14 or gripping end. The guides 22 are preferably hollow and have approximately a one-quarter-inch ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) span. The guides 22 are preferably affixed to the lower side of the handle 12 and secure the  
20 placement of the metal rod 20 to the handle 12. The fork 10 may use one guide 22 to allow the rod 20 to pivot up and down and left and right. In the preferred embodiment, the fork 10 includes a plurality of guides 22 to prevent rotational movement. In

embodiments having a plurality of guides 22, all but one guide 22 may have a slot 25 or other structure for removing the rod 20.

A round cap or stop 21 terminates the end of the rod 20 proximal the grip 14 to prevent the rod 20 from pulling out of or passing completely through the guides 22. The  
5 opposite tine-facing end of the rod 20 supports the cross-bracket 24. The cross-bracket 24 is approximately two-inch (2") in length and one-half-inch ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ") in height, and is attached to the rod 20 at approximately ninety-degrees with reference to the rod 20.

The barbecue fork 10 provides a convenient tool for the handling of food items prepared on grills and barbecue pits. The barbecue fork 10 simplifies the task of  
10 retrieving and accessing food items from a grill and allows it to be done with one hand. The rod 20 and cross bracket 24 provide additional support to allow the fork 10 to independently hold food items. Food is released by pushing the rod 20 with the bracket 24 against the meat and returning it to its original position.

The fork 10 can be made with a stainless steel, wooden or plastic handle 12,  
15 which can also be encased within a plastic or rubber grip piece, such as the grip 14. The push rod of the barbecue fork 10 can be made of a metal or durable plastic material, and the entire fork 10 can be made in various sizes. All parts of the barbecue fork 10 (e.g. handle, tine head, rod, guides, attachment cap and bracket) are preferably made of 1810 stainless steel material. In an alternative embodiment, a thermometer device 30 may be  
20 incorporated with or in the handle of the barbeque fork 10 to check the temperature of the meat. The thermometer 30 preferably includes a temperature probe in at least one of the tines 18.

To use the fork 10, the user of the simply inserts the tines 18 into the desired food item, and its rod 20 maneuvers to allow the bracket 24 to be positioned and provide additional weight support beneath the food item. The user then pushes the rod 20 forward to cause the release of the attached food item.

5           The instant invention has been shown and described herein in what is considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiment. It is recognized, however, that departures may be made therefrom within the scope of the invention and that obvious structural and/or functional modifications will occur to a person skilled in the art.